

DS685

.W28

1/5

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 894 955 3

Hollinger Corp.

pH 8.5

05685
W28

GOVERNOR TAFT IN THE PHILIPPINES

A REVIEW OF HIS EVIDENCE

GIVEN BEFORE THE

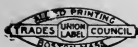
SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE PHILIPPINES

BY

WINSLOW WARREN

Boston, Mass.

1902?





W 12 N 42

II S685
W28

GOVERNOR TAFT IN THE PHILIPPINES.

THE high standing of Governor Taft as a gentleman of great legal ability and integrity of character, as well as his position as President of the Philippine Commission, render his testimony of value and entitle it to our careful consideration. That he entered upon his duties in the East with high motives, and with faith that good would come to the Filipinos as the result of his mission, may well be admitted, and it is with satisfaction that we note he concedes that independence may hereafter be granted to the Filipinos, adverse as he expresses himself to any concession or promise on our part now. It is not easy, however, to follow him in the reasons that he offers for our withholding such promise, the substance being that it would excite the Filipinos and render them unduly hopeful, while he admits that the absence of a definite policy or promise hampers the Commission and furnishes no means of satisfying the unrest and disappointed aspirations of the Filipino people.

Before making any comment upon special points of his evidence it is well to quote certain general statements in his own language, as taken from the printed report of the evidence given before the Senate Committee.

Page 325 he says: "My proposition is that it is the duty of the United States to establish there a government suited to the present possibilities of the people, which shall gradually change, conferring more and more rights upon the people to govern themselves, thus educating them in self-government until their knowledge of government, their knowledge of individual liberty, shall be such that further action may be taken, either by giving them statehood, or by making them a quasi-independent government, like Canada or Australia, or, if they desire it, by independence."

Page 328: "Practically the effect of such a promise (to give independence) would be exactly the opposite from that which the argument presupposes. The promise

to give them independence when they are fit for it would be accepted by them as a promise to give them independence certainly during the lifetime of the present generation. It would at once bring into a discussion of every issue the question whether now were not the people ready for independence. It would drive out capital; prevent capital from coming there; and upon the investment of capital, the building of railroads, the enlargement of vision of the Filipino people, much of our hope of progress must depend."

Page 339: "My own judgment is that the best policy, if a policy is to be declared at all, is to declare the intention of the United States to hold the islands indefinitely until the people shall show themselves fit for self-government under a gradually increasing popular government, when their relation to the United States, either of statehood, or of quasi-independence like the colony of Australia or Canada, can be declared after mutual conference."

Page 346: "If I may say it, personally, I did not favor going into the Philippines. I was sorry at the time we got into it. But we are there, and I see no other possible means of discharging that duty which chance has put upon us than to carry out the plan I suggest."

Page 347: "Now I have been called an optimist, I think the Mark Tapley of this business. It is true I am an optimist. If I did not believe in the success of what we are attempting to do out there I would resign and come home."

Page 405: "Q. Will you please state the grounds of your objections to the acquisition of the islands by the United States."

A. "Because I am not an expansionist, and I would much prefer that we should proceed in the United States to make the government better here than to go to distant possessions. I said so at the time I was appointed, and I have not changed my mind in that respect."

Page 407: "For the people of the United States it probably would be better that chance had not thrown the Filipino people under our guidance and protection."

These are frank and fair statements, and after reading them we are somewhat unprepared for the evasive character of much of the testimony, the very apparent unwillingness to answer with directness questions throwing doubt upon the wisdom of our Philippine policy, and,

the tendency sometimes, to overstate, and to obscure the meaning.

We may make some allowance for his very optimistic temperament and also for the necessity of squaring things that seem utterly inconsistent with views previously expressed, and perhaps charge up some things to the strange effect upon the American mind which life in the Philippines seems to produce, but even then it is difficult to understand the broad difference of opinion as to conditions in the islands shown to exist between him and equally good authorities, civil and military.

He seems to have been singularly unfamiliar with the writings of eminent historians of the Philippines, with the reports of the first Philippine Commission and with those of the generals of our army, and in repeated instances when extracts are read to him expresses his disagreement — Page 79, he differs from General Bell as to the desire of the people for peace, Page 80, he says — “I am here to give my own views. Many of these matters involve questions of opinion upon which there is very likely to be a difference. I approach this question from a somewhat different standpoint from the military commanders.”

Pages 93-94 — he differs from an article on the Philippines transmitted to the Committee by the Secretary of War.

Page 101 — he differs from Mr. F. H. Sawyer, the eminent writer upon the Philippines.

Page 136 — from General McArthur.

Page 137 — from General Bell again.

Page 160 — from the historian J. G. Foreman.

Page 313 — from President Schurman.

Page 323 — from present members of the Philippine Commission.

Page 373 — he is ignorant of President Schurman's investigation of the circumstances of General Luna's death or of the statements in Sonnichsen's book upon the same subject.

Page 338 — he did not know of General Anderson's statement as to conversations with Aguinaldo.

Page 394-5 — he doubts the statement concerning the Philippines in Professor Worcester's book.

Page 397-400 — he differs entirely from the reports of the surgeon general and Surgeon Mason as to the health of the country.

In addition to this his knowledge of the conditions in China and India is very vague, and it does not anywhere appear that he has familiarized himself with the methods adopted by other nations in the government of oriental people, or with their results.

It is more strange still that he has apparently made little effort to acquaint himself with the views and aspirations of the Filipino people by conferring with their real leaders, and we find on page 372 the following surprising admission :

“ Q. Have you ever talked with Aguinaldo?

“ A. No I have never seen him.

“ Q. You have never had communication with him?

“ A. No, sir. He sent word to the Commission that while he was in the custody of the military he did not feel like calling on the Commission, but that as soon as he should be relieved from that custody he would call and pay his respects.”

One would have thought that a conference with such leaders would have been the first consideration by an official who proposed to govern the islands intelligently and for that end appreciated the importance of a knowledge of the inner feelings and peculiar traits of the Filipinos.

Yet this is what he says of Aguinaldo and other leaders and it is worth quoting in his own words, for it portrays men of great power and capacity.

Page 375: “I think Aguinaldo is probably the best known name, with the exception of Rizal, in the islands. That his personality is not generally known by the people I am very confident, because after the short campaign he showed himself very little to the people. His capture, in face of the general impression that he had some divine method of avoiding either injury or capture, has, it is reported to me, very much affected his prestige among the people.

“ Aguinaldo is a man of dignity. He is a man of limited education. He is a man who knows how to keep his own counsel. That is not a widely spread trait among the Filipinos. He is a man who knows the failings of the uneducated Filipinos, and has the power of reconciling leaders who are jealous of each other, and of avoiding jealousy of himself.”

Senator Carmack: “Very remarkable qualities for a leader.”

“A. Yes, sir. That his idea of civil liberty or any kind of liberty is advanced, I have had no reason from my observation to think. But we have proceeded without regard to Aguinaldo. He is a prisoner, with much freedom in going about if he desires, but he has never availed himself of it.”

Pages 386-87: “A. He (Senor Paterno) is a well-educated man. He is well educated both in Tagalog and in Spanish. He has written a number of books — one, I think, an ancient history of the islands.

“A. I understand they (Calderon and Gonzales) prepared it (the Philippine Constitution) by reference to the Mexican and Argentine Republic Constitutions and comparison with that of the United States.

“Q. With reference to the Constitution of Malolos, do any considerable number of Filipinos have any familiarity with the history of the people of the United States?

“A. There are some who have given a good deal of study to it, but there are not many. I suppose Buen-camino has studied the Constitution as much as any of them and probably Calderon as much as any. I know Arenata, the solicitor-general, has studied the common law with a view to preparing himself for the changes that were made in the practice. Then I have no doubt that Chief Justice Arellano has done so, but others do not occur to me.

“Q. Have these people any knowledge of, or have they studied, so far as you know, the Declaration of Independence of the United States?

“A. I suppose they have. I have no doubt that in connection with the Constitution they have studied the Declaration of Independence. I know that Mabini has, for he talked to me about it.

“Q. I suppose you know, as a matter of history, that in the interview between Gen. T. M. Anderson and Aguinaldo, General Anderson said to him that in its history of one hundred and twenty-five years, the United States had had no colonies, and Aguinaldo said to him that he had studied the Constitution of the United States and no provision was found there for the establishment and control of colonies. Do you remember that historically?

“A. No, sir. I do not remember it. It may have occurred. That Aguinaldo himself has studied the Con-

stitution of the United States or the Declaration of Independence except through what Mabini told him I should venture to doubt. It may be. I do not mean to deny it."

Very little more than this can be said of many leaders in America, and the man who, like Aguinaldo, has the sense to keep his own counsel, who knows the feelings of the people, and can reconcile jealousies while keeping his own popularity, comes perilously near to the kind of leadership of Abraham Lincoln.

Mabini, who is mentioned here, Governor Taft and all other authorities agree, is a man of uncommon ability and scholarship and the intellectual leader of Aguinaldo's government.

He is now banished to Guam by military order for advocating the independence of his people. He is partially paralyzed and unable to fight.

The first one hundred and thirty pages of the evidence are taken up largely with interesting accounts of the instructions and general views of the Commission, their visits to the various provinces, their reception, the condition of the people at that time, and the various measures taken to create civil government. It is noteworthy that Governor Taft does not join in the effort to depreciate the character of the Filipino people. He finds them generally an honest, temperate, kindly, courteous, hospitable people, admirable in their home life, showing remarkable respect for women, and he expresses himself as strongly against the idea that they are a treacherous or a disorderly people. In point of education he thinks them less advanced than many other writers maintain — although in all the provinces he found a certain proportion of highly educated men who controlled the more ignorant masses. As to the latter, he finds that some can read and write a little in Spanish, and others in their own languages. Their fondness for and knowledge of music he thinks quite unusual. The general impression from his testimony is that the Tagalos and Visayans — the important Christian people — are fairly well advanced in oriental civilization, and with a good deal of capacity for receiving instruction and acquiring mechanical knowledge.

There are other parts of Governor Taft's testimony that we read with less satisfaction than the foregoing, for they are much less candid and straightforward. The effort to fix upon Aguinaldo responsibility for the death of General

Luna seems a piece of special pleading. Early in his testimony Governor Taft had gone out of his way to state that Luna was killed by Aguinaldo's orders, and that Funston had informed him that Aguinaldo had confessed it to him. When pressed to state more particularly what Funston said, the following testimony was given:

Page 371: "Q. Do you know whether the fact that General Funston had made that statement of the confession of Aguinaldo had ever been made public in the United States before you made it the other day?

"A. I do not know anything about it.

"Q. You have no knowledge of such a thing?

"A. No, sir.

"Q. Do you know why you stated it, Governor?

"A. I do not remember what was the connection which suggested it.

"Q. There was, as I recall, no question relating to it?

"A. I have not examined it. I do not now remember. Aguinaldo did not make it as a confession, he merely stated it as the result of Luna's conspiracy.

"Q. Do you know whether he made a statement of that kind to anybody else than to General Funston?

"A. No, sir.

"Q. Have you heard of such a statement?

"A. No, sir.

"Q. What was the discrimination that you made between a confession and a statement in relation to that matter?

"A. I mean that he did not regard it as a confession at all. He regarded the circumstances as justifying his action.

"Q. And he regarded the statement as a matter of course?

"A. Yes, sir." . . .

I have always understood that the killing of Luna was due to very decided differences of opinion between him and Aguinaldo and the formation of what Aguinaldo thought was a conspiracy against him. But I had never before heard a statement that Aguinaldo had made such a remark to General Funston.

"Q. It has never been denied, so far as you know, by Aguinaldo or any of his friends that the assassination of Luna was at the instance of Aguinaldo?

"A. I do not understand it otherwise.

"Q. Governor Taft, were you aware that it was the subject of an investigation by the previous Commission of which Schurman was president?

"A. No, sir, I may have read it, but I do not recollect it."

And when Schurman's report was read to him, as the result of a careful investigation exonerating Aguinaldo, he could only say, "I only knew generally that the circumstances were that Luna was shot at the door of Aguinaldo's tent or his headquarters, by his guard;" and again when confronted by Sonnichsen's book of "Ten Months in Captivity," containing the statement of Lieutenant Villamor, who was one of Luna's partisans, that Luna's friends never accused Aguinaldo of the general's death, he could not remember of having read the book, but said, "If the Villamor to whom that alludes is the Villamor whom I know, — and I know three of them, — if he is the judge whom we have appointed, — I should place a good deal of credence in his evidence," and then added, he was sorry that in a desultory conversation like this examination, he should have made any allusion to Luna's death. The impression given by the examination upon this point and the evident attempt of the majority of the committee to obstruct questions calculated to bring out the real facts, is, that both the majority of the committee and the governor were very willing that the odium of the killing of Luna should rest upon Aguinaldo, although his character had been entirely cleared from the charge by most reliable American and Filipino authorities.

In view of Secretary Root's letter of Feb. 17, 1902, that "the war in the Philippines has been conducted by the American army *with scrupulous regard for the rules of civilized warfare, with careful and genuine consideration for the prisoner and the non-combatant, with self-restraint and with humanity never surpassed, if ever equalled, in any conflict, worthy only of praise and reflecting credit upon the American people,*" and especially now that Major Gardener's report has been reluctantly furnished and much reliable evidence already offered of inhuman barbarities and tortures it is well to notice that although Governor Taft makes no allusion to the Gardener report, which it appeared later had been forwarded by him to the War Department, and so did not appear in the long series of reports of governors and others ap-

pended to his testimony, he does say, Page 65: "War is hard, war is rough, war is cruel, and when the death and the suffering that were caused to many Filipinos were known to their brethren, it is not reasonable to expect that they should love the instrument by which that punishment was inflicted."

This quotation is curious by comparison with a great deal of his testimony wherein he expresses the opinion that they do "love the instrument," and that a large portion of the people are friendly to our rule. The only way he accounts for it being the greatness of his instructions and the happiness the Filipinos feel in having civil government after their experience of the military method. Page 74, he says: "I have heard charges of whippings, and charges of what has been alluded to as the water cure. They were rife in Manila, and I was about to proceed as to the responsibility and how they came about, and the possible explanations of them. Of course it was no duty of mine. That was a military question."

Page 75: "What I am trying to do is to state what seemed to us the explanation of these cruelties — that cruelties have been inflicted — that people have been shot when they ought not to have been; that there have been individual instances of water cure, that torture which I believe involves pouring water down the throat so that a man swells and gets the impression that he is going to be suffocated, and then tells what he knows, which was a frequent treatment under the Spaniards, I am told,— all these things are true. There are some rather amusing instances of Filipinos who came in and said they would not say anything until they were tortured — that they must have an excuse for saying what they proposed to say."

One is tempted to ask here, "amusing," to whom, and whether it can be believed that torture was so much a general practice in the American army that these poor Filipinos expected it as a matter of course, and were willing to be killed, or nearly so, in that way, merely for an "excuse."

Page 77: "Q. When a war is conducted by a superior race against those whom they consider inferior in the scale of civilization, is it not the experience of the world that the superior race will almost involuntarily practise inhuman conduct?"

"A. There is much greater danger in such a case than in dealing with whites. There is no doubt about that."

It is fair to say that Governor Taft credits the military authorities with efforts to prevent these things, although he mentions no case of punishment, but still it is not easy to understand how he can justify himself for making no reference to the existence of the Gardener report.

After this, and the evidence since admitted, of torture, burning, and slaughter, one is not much impressed with the objections Governor Taft states to our withdrawal from the islands.

Page 328: "Q. What would happen to them if we withdrew in this fashion?

"A. The personal hostility between leading Filipinos at times has been so great as to lead to bloody measures. How far they would be carried here I have no idea. That is conjectural."

Page 329: "A. Of course if you left the islands to anybody you would leave them I assume to some sort of a committee or parliament appointed or selected, who would be dominated probably by those whose violent methods have continued the guerilla warfare, and that such a body could be created by proclamation within a reasonable time I have no doubt. But that it would not constitute a stable government, that it would give rise to anarchy and division between the tribes and between individuals of power and force, I have no doubt."

Page 330: "A. Now that they can form such a government as Aguinaldo formed I have no doubt. I understand this proposition to be to turn over to that government, whatever it may be, the sovereignty of the islands. Now after that turning over I think what I have stated will follow.

"Q. We would have to go back very soon?

"A. Yes, sir.

This we submit in all fairness to the Filipinos — even if such consequences would follow as Governor Taft fears, shows no different state of things from that existing for years in Mexico and now existing in various parts of South America, and it is hard to see how the Filipinos, if these fears were justified, would be any worse off than they are now under the bloody rule of this republic. A military despotism is what is predicted; can any fair man say it does not exist now? — with this difference only: it would then be a military despotism of their own choosing; it is now a foreign and detested military despotism.

The optimistic bent of his mind is shown nowhere more clearly than in his absolute reliance upon the sincerity of his demonstrative receptions in the Filipino villages, his confidence in the peaceful attitude of the people and in their willingness or even desire to accept our sovereignty. He finds that "order reigns in Warsaw" and infers that the people are happy and contented. Upon these last points he acknowledges his entire disagreement with Generals Chaffee and McArthur, although their reports when produced and read seemed to be new to him and accepted with some surprise.

The view that his evidence takes of the attitude of the Filipinos towards independence is absolutely contrary to that of the military and of President Schurman, and except for the roseate hue of much of his evidence it would seem incredible that he could convince himself of its correctness. Having admitted that many of the Filipinos were thoroughly educated and able men, and that the masses were controlled by such, knowing full well the history of their prolonged struggle against Spain for independence, and the sacrifices they have made in the war now going on, — he tries to explain that they do not want real independence and do not know its meaning, and he applies this judgment impartially to educated and to ignorant men.

It is almost impossible to believe in the sincerity of these statements, or if sincere, in his capacity to judge of the aspirations of the people.

Page 50-51 : "Q. What I want to inquire is whether the Filipino of average intelligence distinguishes between an independent government and a benevolent fraternal government such as it is presumed we are attempting to give them?

"A. Oh, I think he does. You ask me about a Filipino of average intelligence.

"Q. Of average intelligence.

"A. You assume that he has some education and some intelligence.

"Q. Oh, yes. . . . Assume that he is able to read and write, whether it is Spanish or his tribal language . . . I mean of average intelligence.

"A. I think he does. . . . The difficulty we find in the Filipino people and the difficulty which will remain during the present generation possibly, is the ease with

which an educated Filipino who has any wealth can control and oppress his own people. . . . So when you speak of independence, if you mean government by an alien, by a foreign country, I think the average intelligent Filipino of reasonable education understands it, but the great mass have very little thought beyond their own village and the control of those local affairs.

“Q. Are we to depend upon that ignorance to make the Filipinos friendly to our rule?

“A. No, sir; the hope of making things better there is the educated classes, which as I say are small.”

So far Governor Taft portrays a state of things which is essentially true of many civilized nations.

Page 340 he says: “The term ‘independence,’ when used by the insurgents, was supposed to indicate something very good without any definition of what it was, so that many of the troops, as Prof. Worcester tells me, for I am not myself an authority on that question, in cheering said ‘dependencia’ instead of ‘independencia.’ On the other hand there are intelligent people who use the expression ‘independence’ in an oratorical way without having thought out what the giving of it involves. . . . I venture to say that most of them have not followed to a last analysis what is to be done were independence granted.”

Page 342: “The tendency of all governments under them would be towards absolutism, an oligarchy, which would mean that the presidente of the village would control absolutely the village, the governor would control the province, and the head of the government would control the governors.”

If this be true, one is tempted to ask, what of it? — it simply describes the form of government now administered in the Philippines by the United States, approaches very nearly the government of France, is no worse than Mexico, and has a really startling resemblance to the government of some of our own boss-ridden states.

There is a good deal more of similar evidence intending to convey the impression that the Filipinos do not know what independence means, although he names an imposing list of leaders who are cultivated men, and who *think* they are strongly for independence, — the upshot of it all being in reality that they have not the American idea of independence nor a knowledge nor appreciation of American

institutions — all of which might freely be granted without affecting their right to decide for themselves what degree of independence they should have. It certainly could not safely be claimed that the masses in the French revolution nor the soldiers of our Continental army in 1776, nor in fact the bulk of the people, had “followed to a last analysis what is (was) to be done were independence granted.” If a people is never to have independence until it has reached that stage no people in the world will ever be fitted for it.

No wonder that his answers were evasive as to the duty of a people to submit to oppression, and as to the criminal nature of a struggle against odds for independence.

Page 78-79, Governor Taft: “It is a crime against the Filipino people to keep up that war under the circumstances and those engaged in it have worn out the right to any treatment but that which is severe and within the laws of war.”

Senator Patterson: “Do you mean by that statement that the army fighting for independence has become so small by captures, by battles, by surrenders, that those who remain fighting for independence are guilty of a crime? Is it a crime because the prospective independence is more remote now than it was two or three years ago?”

Governor Taft: “It is a crime because it is subjecting their own people, in whose interests they profess to be carrying on the war, to the greatest privation and suffering.”

Senator Patterson: “At the hands of the American army?”

Governor Taft: “The people who are not in these provinces at all. They are keeping them back from earning a living. They are keeping them back from their ordinary vocations. In the very province of Batangas itself the great majority desire peace, and are only held there because of the system of terrorism of which I speak. Now I say that warfare which depends upon terrorism and murder is a crime. That is all I have to say.”

Senator Patterson: “Is it because in your opinion the independence of the Philippine islands has become hopeless that those who are contending for it are guilty of a crime?”

Governor Taft: “I think independence for the time has become hopeless.”

Senator Patterson: "And therefore those who are fighting for it are guilty of a crime?"

Governor Taft: "They are guilty of a crime in the method which they seek to attain it."

Senator Allison: "I should like to ask the Governor if he understands that these people are fighting for independence. I supposed they were merely making a guerilla warfare?"

Senator Patterson: "Every statement he has made is to the effect that they are fighting for their independence."

Senator Allison: "That these bands are fighting for independence?"

Senator Patterson: "That they are fighting for independence."

Senator Beveridge: "The Governor made the statement yesterday, if the Senator will excuse me —"

Senator Patterson: "He said so the other day in response to a direct question."

Senator Allison: "I did not know that."

Senator Culberson: "It seems that you base your opinion that the warfare now being conducted is a crime on the ground that the great bulk of these people desire peace. Now I will read a sentence from Bell's order:

'A general conviction which the brigade commander shares appears to exist that the insurrection in this brigade continues because the greater part of the people, especially the wealthy ones, pretend to desire, but in reality do not want peace.'

Governor Taft: "That statement I should differ with, and I should differ with it as the result of conversation with men from Batangas which conversations I have had all the time and had just before I left."

On page 383 occurs the following:

"Q. Please give the names of a dozen or more Filipinos distinguished for character and ability who are opposed to the rule of the United States, and who if present could give the committee valuable information as to the conditions and wishes of the Filipino people.

"A. I cannot give you the names of men who are opposed to the rule of the United States in the sense in which you use it. I can give you the names of persons who are understood to be in favor of independence and to belong to a party sometimes called the 'party of intransi-

gentes' and now the 'party of peace.' If that is what you mean, I can give it.

"Q. Give a dozen or more names and their residences?

"A. The persons who would answer the description of the question as I understand it would probably be in arms or assisting those in arms.

"Q. In this connection do I understand you to mean that the people in the Philippine islands who are advocating the independence of the islands are in favor of the rule of the United States?

"A. The present continuance of the rule of the United States there. They do not want the United States to withdraw right away."

Senator Culberson: "So far as I know, nobody does."

But leaving this singular state of things, that a people who have fought for years for independence, and are still fighting desperately for it, do not want it and do not know what it means and yet keep on sacrificing their lives and property under the guide of able and thoroughly educated leaders, we turn to a still more evasive part of the evidence, that relating to the so-called Federal party. It is too long to quote in full. Governor Taft had stated that the Federal party was for peace, that three Philippine members of the Commission were members of the party, and that he had brought a petition for them to be presented to Congress or to the proper authorities here. He also stated that one of the planks in the platform of that party was statehood in the United States, although he was unwilling to admit it was a very important plank — then followed this colloquy.

Page 51: "Q. If you will permit me in this connection, two members of your Commission, I believe, are members of the Federal party?

"A. Yes, sir, three of them are.

"Q. Three — and the object of that party as contained in its platform is, first, territorial government with representation in Congress, and, further away, statehood?

"A. Yes, sir.

"Q. And that same promise or an assurance of that description is being made to the people to induce them to surrender their arms and submit to the government?

"A. If you are stating that 'whereas' as coming from me I will have to qualify it in some respects.

“ Q. That is the object of the party and the declaration of its platform — you agree with me?

“ A. Yes — that is true.

“ Q. And the Federal party is, as stated in your report, an effective instrument in the pacification of the islands?

“ A. It is.

“ Q. Is not that party holding out a promise in that way — I do not mean expressly — that those ends will be realized if the people submit to the authority of the United States?

“ A. The Federal party, if you will permit me to say so, is made up of a majority of the educated people in the islands. It is certainly the political organization most widespread in the islands. The Federal party formed their platform. They brought it to us to approve or disapprove. We said we could not approve or disapprove — that the question of statehood was a question so far removed in the future that it was none of our business to discuss it, and so we have reiterated through the islands. The statement in the platform is that. That is one of the aspirations of the party. It does not involve, and the platform does not state that it has ever been promised by anybody having any authority in the islands, and while its presence there may have united and brought people to the hope it might be done, and it may be that some people have been misled by it.

“ Q. Would it not necessarily have that significance to the people ignorant to a degree, when three of the members of the Commission, officials under our own Government, are the most prominent leaders of that party?

“ A. It is possible that it has had some influence of that sort.

“ Q. What I wanted to ask in this connection is, when that expectation built up in that way is disappointed, as it may be, what will be the effect upon the people?

“ A. To begin with, the question of statehood, like the question of independence, is so far in the future in my judgment — I give only my judgment — and it is so understood by the people there, I think — that I do not regard that feature of it as very important.

“ The truth is that the Federal party included a good

many who were not in favor of statehood, who were in favor of ultimate independence and so expressed themselves."

On pages 322, 323, and 324 follow a series of questions as to Governor Taft's own view as to giving the Filipinos statehood in this Union, which he seems very slow to answer directly and takes the ground that the matter cannot be discussed to advantage for fifty or a hundred years, which, of course, means never; but he finally admits that he is opposed to statehood, although he leaves us in doubt as to his meaning, as follows:

Page 377: "Q. If they should continue in the Philippines urgently to insist upon statehood or some early action by Congress looking to that end or to the incorporation of the islands as an integral part of the United States, and no action should be taken, will it not tend to create dissatisfaction and a feeling of disappointment which will encourage the insurrection, especially as you said the other day a number of people who are in the Federal party are really in favor of independence? Will they not, when disappointed in the hope of some early action by Congress looking to that end, turn toward independence — will they not turn toward insurrection?"

"A. I think if Congress takes the action I recommended yesterday and if that be understood to be the policy of the Government it will largely decrease, although I do not think it will end, the advocacy on the one hand of statehood or on the other of independence. But it will convince a large number of people that Congress desires that a stable civil government shall be founded with enlarging popular power, for the purpose of educating the people to complete self-government. A declaration of that sort, by Congress, would aid us in doing the work we have to do, as I conceive, before any question of statehood or independence shall properly arise."

It should be noted here that the policy he had stated the day before was a policy of holding the islands only until they were ready for statehood or quasi-independence — a policy which Congress thus far has given no sign of adopting. His views were quoted in the beginning of this review.

Page 377, continued: "Q. You stated the other day that you thought it was unwise for Congress to indicate any purpose of acceding to the petition of the Federal party in

these respects. I wish to ask you, on the other hand, if you would disapprove of or think it unwise for Congress to make a positive declaration to the effect that to incorporate eight or ten million Asiatics into the body of our citizenship would be injurious and that the admission to statehood at any future time of an Asiatic archipelago would tend to degrade and endanger the character of our Government. What would be the effect of such a declaration on the part of Congress?

“A. The answer to that question depends altogether upon the effect of what we do there. I can conceive that the people there could become so well educated, so peaceable, and could so understand our form of government that it might not be injurious to the Commonwealth of the United States to take them in, but whether or not that point will ever be reached is a question upon which there must always be grave doubt until the experiment has been tried.

“Q. As I understand you, then you think the question whether we ought to incorporate eight or ten million Asiatics into our citizenship and admit to statehood in the Union an Asiatic archipelago 7,000 miles from our shores is a question which up to this time cannot be answered by a simple yes or no?

“A. Yes, sir.”

And again, after a long statement of the inadvisability of making any promise whatever now to the Filipinos and of the difficulty and un wisdom of now discussing statehood, we meet with the following confusing answers:

Page 323: “Q. Then this statement by the Federal party, of which three members of the United States Commission are active members, is false?—

“‘To make of the Philippines a colony of the United States or to grant independence to the Philippines would be to hand the islands over to disorder and to anarchy, to destruction and to chaos.’

“A. True as of what date.

“Q. As of the date of the petition?

“A. True as of now. It is just as true as gospel.

“Q. It is just as true as gospel that to make the Philippines a colony of the United States is to hand the islands over to disorder and to anarchy?

"A. No.

"Q. To destruction and chaos?

"A. No.

"Q. That is exactly what this party states to the Congress of the United States?

"A. To give them independence now, it is true. . . . So far as a colony is concerned I object to that course just the same as I do to establishing what the permanent relations between these islands and the United States shall be.

"Q. Is not the distinction between a territory with the Constitution of the United States extended over it, such as our territories in the United States, and a colony clear and distinct?

"A. I do not think it is."

"Q. You do not?

"A. No, sir, the idea which the Federal party have with respect to colonial government is the government that prevails under Spain.

"Q. The Federal party have no idea that the United States would treat them in that way?

"A. The treatment of these islands for exploitation with complete government in Spain is just what they have in mind in that statement."

The answers to these questions rather dispel the idea that the Filipinos do not know the meaning of what they strive for, for they indicate an intelligent comprehension of the refinement of words used in platforms which would stagger most of the supporters of our party platforms, but farther than that they clearly show that the Federal party are being led on by false hopes, and suggest strongly the policy we followed towards Aguinaldo's original government, which we allowed him to build up without protest, in a certain way assisted, and then, when our troops arrived, deliberately crushed out. It will be noticed that Governor Taft speaks of many having joined the Federal party to help independence under pretence of favoring statehood. This was so utterly contrary to his previous views that they did not want independence, that later in the testimony they had an awkward bearing upon the Governor's explanation of the need for the sedition laws.

Without stating the examination in detail it is interesting to find that Governor Taft, while predicting anarchy if we withdraw, is not disposed to deny that practical anarchy

has been the condition of a large part of the islands since we went there, and that he is not hopeful of the future of the islands if they are exploited by Americans or others, nor unless we select our officials from honest men of first-class ability, and yet he advocates granting franchises, selling lands to capitalists, building railroads, etc., which inevitably lead to the exploiting of the islands.

Page 377: "Q. You spoke the other day of the uplifting power of our civilization and our tutelage and the practice of self-government. Our success in this respect would depend upon the character of the administration and the fitness and capability of the administrators, would it not?

"A. Yes, sir, largely.

"Q. If the Americans whom we keep in authority over there are men of high character and high purpose, honest and incorruptible, animated by a spirit of real benevolence toward the natives, full of tact and patience, with a sympathetic understanding of the people, you think we can succeed? If, on the other hand, they are mere carpet-baggers and adventurers who go there to fill their pockets and get away as soon as possible, if the islands are governed chiefly with a view to their exploitation and in the interest of non-resident syndicates and landlords, then you think we shall make a very bad mess of it?

"A. Yes, we shall."

He afterwards admits the possibility of corruption and trouble, and that the tone adopted by Americans and foreigners towards the natives is unfortunate and dangerous, and is fully aware of the difficulty of settling the question of the friars, but favors purchasing their lands in the hope that they will then take themselves off and remove that source of trouble.

How far this ideal state of things which he hopes for as regards office-holders and settlers is likely to be realized under our form of government and with changing administrations may be judged by our own past experience at the South and by what is constantly happening in our own land. Can there be the slightest probability that we shall govern a distant colony better than we do ourselves, or that carpet-baggers and corruptionists will be sternly warned off from the Philippines? If not, then the "bad mess" he speaks of will soon be upon us, and there are strong indications that we are already in it.

The Governor's account of the effect upon the Filipinos of writings and speeches in this country has its amusing side, although he talks in generalities and adds little of importance. He rather guardedly expresses the opinion that some speeches and writings have had a bad effect and obstructed the Commission's work, but when pressed as to the effect of speeches, etc., derogatory to the Filipinos, and as to what kind of speeches he referred to, he is never explicit, and when asked directly as to the effect of Senator Hoar's speech, the majority of the Committee became so abnormally sensitive that they excluded the question and thus prevented criticism of one of their august body. although the Governor had spoken freely of Senator Bacon's speech in the Philippines and had promptly answered a question of the chairman as to the effect, in encouraging the Filipinos to resist, of speeches, articles, and pamphlets here, which must have been largely by Senators. This can be found on pages 270, 271, and 272, but elicits nothing of special interest.

The most sensational part of the testimony and one that placed Governor Taft in the least pleasant light was that relating to the so-called sedition laws. He had at first stated that when they were issued he had been sick and had not signed them. Perceiving later that this seemed like a reflection upon the other members of the Commission, he carefully explained that he meant no criticism of their action.

As he had repeatedly stated that the Filipinos did not want independence, or know what it meant, and had dwelt upon the improving peace conditions, it was not easy for him to explain why such laws were needed, at this late day and with such happy prospects of peace, to prevent advocating independence; but he finally claimed that they were important because the Filipinos would advocate *war* under the pretence of advocating independence, or by advocating independence keep up a state of unrest in the islands. But this ran against his statements that a vast majority wanted peace, and did not want independence, and left the law without any basis whatever upon his own analysis of existing conditions. Forgetful apparently that in his answers relating to the Federal party he had said that many joined it to advocate independence under pretence of advocating statehood, he became a good deal involved when questioned why then there was not need of a law pro-

hibiting advocacy of statehood, and why, in view of what he had said, advocating statehood and meaning independence might not keep the islands in the same state of unrest. The difficulties surrounding him here are best shown by quoting the evidence.

Page 368-369: "Q. I should like to ask you a question. Is or is not this the theory upon which the sedition laws are founded that whatever seriously dissatisfies the public with American rule should be suppressed?

"A. No, sir, it is not. All of the sedition and treason laws which were passed, with the exception of sections 9 and 10, are merely a repetition of laws in form or in substance of those passed in every State in the Union, a law which must be adopted in order that a government may protect itself at all. The other two sections were justified, in our judgment, for the reasons I have stated.

"Q. Is not this the theory that whatever tends to prevent peace and continue the insurrection should be suppressed?

"A. Yes, sir.

"Q. I will ask you whether or not there is not danger that you will be compelled to add a clause to the sedition laws making it criminal to advocate immediate admission into the Union as a state?

"A. No, sir, it is not, for there is no such party in arms against the sovereignty of the United States.

"Q. But the serious and earnest advocacy of such admission and fault-finding with the Government because they are not admitted would tend, would it not, to increase the dissatisfaction of the Filipino people with American rule, and make them the more willing to aid and assist those whom you call insurrectos?

"A. No, sir; that is not the ground upon which this act was passed. It was passed to prevent the real advocacy of the continuance of the war through the pretended advocacy of independence.

"Q. Suppose they should seek to continue the war through the pretended advocacy of admission into the Union as a State?

"A. There is no such condition presented.

"Q. Is it not likely to occur?

"A. It is not likely to occur.

"Q. But suppose it should occur?

"A. I do not know what we could do under the cir-

cumstances, but we have gone as far as I think it is necessary to go.

“Q. If you should conclude that it were necessary to go further, you would go further?

“A. We propose, as far as we can, to suppress that war by every means known to civilized nations, and it is not a question of theory with us; it is not a question of argument as to constitutional rights in a peaceful government where there is no insurrection; it is a question of putting down something that is doing great injury to the Philippine people, and we propose to do it if our powers extend to that degree.

“Q. The trouble seems to be that you sometimes have the islands in insurrection, and then again you have the islands in a state of perfect quietude and peace?

“A. Well, we do, when what we say is presented in that way. As a matter of fact, I have explained the conditions of the islands and the extent to which war prevails, but the carrying on of a war of insurrection in two, or three, or four provinces, is a nucleus about which every dissatisfied spirit is pleased to gather, and is also an excuse for delaying legislative aid to the islands which we now seek. It postpones the coming of capital and it keeps the people of the provinces in a restless condition.

“I may say, with respect to the suppression of the advocacy of independence, that there are in the border states of the Union examples of legislation of that character which I did not know of at the time this statute was passed. For instance, my attention has been called to the statutes of Maryland, in which there was a law denouncing the advocacy of the separation of Maryland from the Union, or its secession. It is only the question of a government established, having the right, using civilized means, to suppress insurrection against its sovereignty.”

Senator Beveridge: “To maintain its own life.”

“Q. Did you give careful and critical examination to the preparation of the treason and sedition laws?

“A. No, sir.

“Q. You did not, before you approved them, examine them critically to see whether they compare in substance and in effect with the laws of which they are alleged to be copies?

"A. I never approved them.

"Q. I see.

"A. I do not want to be misunderstood —

"Q. I understand. You have heretofore explained that.

"A. I was not discharging any duties at the time those laws were passed, and I did not see them before they were drawn or after they were drawn, until I came here.

"Q. General Wright did all that the Senator from Colorado has asked you about?

"A. Yes, sir. General Wright was the person to whom was assigned the drafting of the entire criminal code, and this is part of the criminal code, the passage of which the turning of Manila from military to civil government necessitated, because had this not been passed there would probably have been in force no criminal law punishing treason and sedition.

"Q. Now that they have been passed, knowing what the other laws are to which the Senator has referred, and knowing the conditions there, they meet your approval?

"A. Yes, sir, because I know the circumstances."

These sedition laws afforded the Governor several bad "quarters of an hour" during the examination, particularly when a close questioning developed the fact that they were issued as a *war measure* and yet excepted from their provisions several provinces which turned out to be the very ones where war was going on, leaving as the only provinces to which they could apply the ones where according to Governor Taft's previous testimony profound peace existed, and where the Filipinos were so much in love with our benevolent sovereignty that they had ceased to advocate even that independence of which they did not know the meaning, and were absorbed in plans for statehood in the American Union to which Governor Taft was opposed, and so far as known no one in the United States would agree.

On page 376 we find the following colloquy:

"Q. You have justified the law on the ground of its being a war measure, and that it is based on a state of insurrection?

"A. Yes, sir.

"Q. By this law you exclude three provinces from its operation?

Senator Cormack: "The law applies only to pacified provinces."

"A. That is because these provinces are under military control, and the military commander of course has arbitrary powers of arrest.

"Q. In other words, notwithstanding the fact that the basis of the law is a state of insurrection and a state of war, the law applies only to the provinces which have been pacified?

"A. Yes, sir.

"Q. Is not that a fact?

"A. Yes, sir; that is true."

Page 389: "Q. I will ask you if these papers [Philippine newspapers] have been at liberty, or are they now at liberty, to advocate the immediate or ultimate independence of the Philippine islands?

"A. They are affected just as much as any one else by the statute on which I commented yesterday.

"Q. They are, therefore, prohibited from advocating it?

"A. That would seem to follow.

"Q. The free discussion of that question, then, is not permitted in the islands either to individuals or to the press?

"A. That is the effect of the statute pending the war.

"Q. It is a war measure, as I understand it?

"A. Yes, sir.

"Q. The statute is not in its terms limited by time?

"A. Yes, sir; it is.

"Q. How long?

"A. Pending the war.

"Q. Until peace is established — is that the provision of the statute?

"A. Yes, sir."

This part of the examination reveals clearly enough the inherent difficulties an American must find in justifying a drastic law, making it a crime for a people to seek or even to advocate independence, against a foreign power applying military force to their subjugation.

With all the inconsistencies, the evasions, the subterfuges, in the evidence, it still remains that Governor Taft's statements are the most important yet made before the Committee, as to the situation in the Philippines, the character of the people, and the action of our authorities,

civil and military. Unfortunately, it is not easy to distinguish facts from fancies and allowances must frequently be made for a kind of optimism which evidently arises from insufficient knowledge or too easily accepted statements of others; and the difficulty is apparent that any man must find who, as conscientious as a political partisan can be, goes to the Philippines to represent an indefinite and tortuous policy, and tries there to solve by a middle course a question which the history of similar attempts has often shown can, in the nature of things, only be solved in one of two ways, by colonial subjugation, or by early independence under such form of government as the intelligent part of the natives choose.

In carrying out the views of a civilian, Governor Taft evidently and frequently came into conflict with the different methods of military commanders whose one idea was to suppress and stifle by violent action all opposition, and the inconsistency between such a course and the effort to placate and to inspire confidence among the Filipinos, in our beneficence, seems to have caused a good deal of embarrassment.

It is a just criticism of Governor Taft that, with all his legal ability and no inconsiderable experience, he shows slight acquaintance with the history of oriental nations and something approaching to indifference as to sources of information — that he lacks appreciation of the Malay character, is credulous of the unverified statements of prejudiced or interested parties, and that he treats lightly these racial characteristics which have brought to nought the plans of greater statesmen than himself and which are likely to make utter failure of attempts to engraft American ideas and institutions upon a race unfitted by nature, by climate, and by centuries of inherited traits and ways, for their acceptance.

One regrets many lost opportunities for more complete and thorough knowledge of the motives and aspirations of the people with whom he was called upon to deal, and can only ascribe to his early training in Ohio politics a certain partisan tone, and a very apparent unwillingness to testify directly upon matters which bear hardly upon the administration policy, as well as a spirit of omission, if not of suppression, of facts of considerable importance.

Senator Patterson's exclamation in course of the examination sums up the general difficulty we find with the

testimony: "The trouble seems to be that you sometimes have the islands in a state of insurrection, and then again you have the islands in a state of perfect quietude and peace."

But apart from the testimony of Governor Taft himself a reader of the proceedings gains a most unpleasant impression as to the character and purpose of the investigation. If truth only was sought for and not a white-washing of ugly facts, it would not have taken on the form of a trial, with the majority of the committee asking as little as possible upon subjects affecting their political views or prospects, and with the minority perforce placed in the position of cross-examiners with their cross-examination obstructed by technical objections for the purpose of shielding the witnesses; nor would there be objections to summoning witnesses asked for by the minority, nor attempts to keep the hearings as little open to the public as possible. The country demands the exact facts as to the Philippines, it desires to condemn no one and to exculpate no one, but it has a right to know what we have done there, what we are doing, and what course in view of the past it would be wise to follow in the future. With less than this it will not be content, and any suspicion of unfairness or of desire to withhold information will react upon the Committee itself.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 894 955 3

DS685

.W28

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 894 955 3

Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5